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## MEDIA RELEASE

### VINNIES SUPPORTS PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION

In advance of a global focus on the rights and wellbeing of migrants and refugees, St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has welcomed the Australian Labor Party's recent decision to support a parliamentary inquiry into immigration detention.

The policy was added to the ALP's platform at the recent National Conference in Brisbane. The Society is urging the Government to commence the parliamentary inquiry before the end of this year. Backing the inquiry is one of the priority items in the Society's newly updated [Policy on People Seeking Asylum](#), which has been presented to the Australian Government.

'We believe that Catholic World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 24 September, is a suitable time to focus attention on the secrecy that has surrounded immigration detention in the offshore facilities under Australia's control as well as here on the mainland,' said the Society's National President, Mark Gaetani.

Pope Francis' theme for the Day is '[Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay](#)', highlighting that no one should be forced to flee their country seeking safety but if they do they should be welcomed and protected.

Mr Gaetani said, 'People go into exile through no fault of their own, and we must show compassion when they come to us seeking refuge.'

'Australia has consistently failed to heed the Pope's message to 'welcome and protect' refugees coming here by boat, although in the last eighteen months there has been some improvement.

'From the stories told by refugees and the experiences of our members there is no doubt that our treatment of many people seeking asylum has been unjust and callous, and that this continues.

'Labor's platform says we will treat people seeking our protection with dignity and compassion, and as a nation we must not harm people seeking refuge. But we need to know the full truth about the cruelty, both offshore and in Australia.

'So the Society welcomes Labor's new policy to initiate a parliamentary inquiry, which should have a key aim of getting quick action to eliminate the remaining injustices,' Mr Gaetani said.

The Society calls on Catholics to use the [booklet](#) issued by the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) to pray for all migrants and refugees on 24 September.

As an immediate action for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the Society invites Catholics to sign a [letter from people of faith](#) urging the transfer to Australia of refugees and people seeking asylum still held in Papua New Guinea. Australians are also invited to sign a similar [letter to their Federal MP](#).

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*The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 45,000 members and volunteers, who work hard to assist people in need and combat social injustice across Australia. Internationally, the Society operates in 153 countries and has over 800,000 members.*

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